rather than regulatory. But as an emotional matter the so-called Underground Railroad promoted the irresistible conflict, the Civil War.

Some readers may reject the conclusions of this book, but no one will find it uninteresting or unimportant.

The Historical Society of Western Pennsylvania  ALFRED P. JAMES

From Trail Dust to Star Dust. By MARGARET GREER. (Danbury, Conn.: Danbury Printing Co., 1960. 120 pp. Illustrations, including a pictorial map of Johnstown. Index. $3.00. A six-color pictorial map, 30 by 23 inches, is available at $2.00.)

The hand-lettered title of this book will undoubtedly be read “from frail dust to star dust” without inspiring the reader to open it and find that it is a history of Johnstown, Pennsylvania. Clarity and legibility are also sacrificed to fancy script on a reduced “Pictorial Map” used as a frontispiece which is otherwise helpful to non-residents to understand many references in the text. If truth be told, some of the word pictures within are also not too clear. These and other criticisms should not discourage the reader who will find that this book will give an over-all history of a dynamic little city which deserves recognition in its own right, aside from its distinction as the site of one of the country’s greatest disasters.

Johnstown, situated in the center of western Pennsylvania, lies in the foothills of the Allegheny Mountains on the line of passage through the Appalachians, which offered least resistance to those who would traverse them on foot, horse, water, or wheeled vehicle, going east or west. By reason of proximity to wood, coal and iron ore which the ingenuity of its early residents used to advantage on a water way developed by the state, it attained national prominence.

The author did extensive research to present an interesting story which is not readily found in any other single book and she does this with the enthusiasm of a “booster.” Had she lived to supervise publication, the book would undoubtedly have profited by editorial revision.

The chapters, which set Johnstown apart from cities of similar size, relate to (1) the rise of its iron and steel industry; (2) its strategical position on the system known as the Pennsylvania Canal, which eventually became the general route of the Pennsylvania
Railroad; and (3) the great flood of May 31, 1889. Many short chapters cover items of less importance.

Johnstown is known among iron men as the "cradle of the steel-rail in this country." The author names the men who were responsible for various phases of its development in Johnstown (in general under the Cambria Iron Company). They include George S. King (with only brief mention of his partner, Dr. Peter Schoenberger), who was the father of the iron industry in Johnstown; John Fritz, famed for the "3 high rolls" which permitted the return "pass" of a rail in the same device; William Kelly, claimant for the invention of the Bessemer process; Daniel J. Morrell, who adopted that process and used it for making rails; and George Fritz, brother of John, who is credited with many inventions on the "blooming rolls." The reader may get the impression that all the railroads of the West were equipped with Johnstown rails exclusively, but that would be a mistake. The author chooses to ignore the fact that due to faulty judgment of managers, the heads of practically every department of Cambria Iron, under Captain Bill Jones, deserted Johnstown to staff Carnegie's new Bessemer plant, the Edgar Thomson. Their first rail was rolled late in 1875 and by the summer of 1878 their production exceeded that of Cambria.

Twelve pages are devoted to the Pennsylvania Canal and the Portage Railroad which hauled the canal boats overland across the mountains in their journey between Pittsburgh and Philadelphia. It was at Johnstown that passengers going East changed from the carrier, water, to the carrier, rail, for the section between Johnstown and Hollidaysburg. The construction of this "System" is regarded as the Commonwealth's greatest engineering accomplishment. Boats, inclines and procedure are depicted and described.

The Great Flood of 1889 and measures of relief are given 15 pages. Description of essential events, as they developed, and timing give an account of the flood which is basically correct. It is to the author's credit that she does not minimize the unprecedented rainfall and the extent of the flooding of the city (1-10 feet) prior to the break in the dam. She does a service in discrediting the story of the rider who was supposed to have spread the alarm, and ridicules the idea that the alarm would have been of value if it had been spread. She cannot, however, resist a flare for the dramatic when she has the river current pile bodies against the Stone Bridge when she means "wreckage, in which there were many
bodies," and elsewhere she would have you believe that many people sought the hills because they feared the South Fork dam would break. This ignores the fact that they had repeatedly been subjected to false alarms about the reservoir. It would be more correct to say that "many families fearing the rising waters of the rivers fled to the hills, though a few may have given a thought to the dam." There is plenty of evidence that those who had most to lose did not believe the dam at South Fork would break and if it did its force would be dissipated in its 15 mile course to the city.

On page 100 the author conveys the impression that straw was an integral part of the construction of the South Fork dam. There is still sufficient evidence in view to impress any observer with the strength of that dam. It was an earth dam faced with riprap. It is a practice throughout the world to prevent the washing of soil by the use of straw, hemlock boughs, stumps and reed mats, especially in case of leakage. The dam did leak but it was not until an unprecedented rainfall caused the water to overflow the crest that the dam went out. In this connection and the subsequent loss of human life she calls it a sacrifice—"sacrifice it was, to the whims of pleasure seekers and the negligent building of an insecure breast of the South Fork dam." This may have been the belief of the author but is not necessarily fact.

As recently as 1934 an engineer* of unquestioned integrity, who himself barely escaped death in that flood, returned and studied the dam and interviewed many responsible people, and who had before him all the data, had this to say: "There is no obvious or evident cause for the censure of any one for the failure of the reservoir except perhaps the original projectors of it in 1852." He states elsewhere that the reservoir was constructed to furnish water for the Pennsylvania Canal "which contributed largely to the prosperity of Johnstown." He states further, "The South Fork Club had a force of workmen to maintain the property in good condition and was zealous in its care of the reservoirs, applying all the usual remedies for leaks and keeping the spill way free from obstructions."

The outcome of all legal actions charging neglect brought against the management of the South Fork Club (owners of the dam), against the members, collectively and individually, and against the Pennsylvania Railroad, would seem to confirm the statements of this engineer without question.

This is an interesting little book which will appear in most libraries concerned with the history of Western Pennsylvania. There it will be used for reference but the residents of Johnstown and many others will find it entertaining reading for pleasure alone.

Historical Society of Western Pennsylvania  ROBERT D. CHRISTIE

By ETHEL W. WILLIAMS, Ph.D. (Rutland, Vt.: Charles E. Tuttle Co., 1960. Pp. 313. Bibliography, Dictionary of Terms and Abbreviations, Index. $4.50.)

Genealogists, amateur or professional, will welcome with profound gratitude Know Your Ancestors, by Dr. Ethel W. Williams. It is a comprehensive, authoritative text, well organized, compiled and indexed.

The collection of bibliography given throughout, shows exhaustive research and is most valuable to all students and those engaged in genealogical work.

The author, a teacher of Genealogical Research in Kalamazoo, Michigan, took her training courses at American University and National Archives in Washington, D. C.; she has therefore an excellent foundation. The instructors are actively engaged in the various fields of research on which they lecture. From this background the author has developed her own lectures and methods and has now given them to the public through this volume.

Dr. Williams presents an orderly arrangement from the introduction of the subject in her first chapter, step by step, in her instruction of assembling material, suggesting the student start with material gathered from relatives in documentary form or traditional. The information can be evaluated for the factual and for what can be proven.

She continues on through charting the record, library research, public records, vital statistics, land records and church records. Through twenty-six chapters, she explains in great detail the procedure of following ancestral trails.

As she covers the states, she gives much information on their repositories of records. The accuracy of her work is most commendable. Those who work with Pennsylvania records will greatly